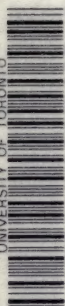


# A CHILD'S DAY

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WALTER DE LA MARE



A CHILD'S DAY



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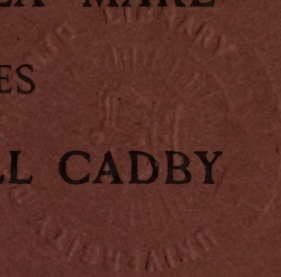
# A CHILD'S DAY

A BOOK OF RHYMES

By WALTER DE LA MARE

TO PICTURES

By CARINE & WILL CADBY



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## A CHILD'S DAY



I SANG a song to Rosamond Rose  
Only the wind in the twilight knows :  
I sang a song to Jeanetta Jennie,  
She flung from her window a silver penny  
I sang a song to Matilda May,  
She took to her heels, and ran away :  
I sang a song to Susannah Sue,  
She giggled the whole of the verses through :

But nevertheless, as sweet as I can,  
I'll sing a song to Elizabeth Ann—  
The same little Ann as there you see  
Smiling as happy as happy can be.  
And all that my song is meant to say  
Is just what she did one long, long day,  
With her own little self to play with only,  
Yet never once felt the least bit lonely.





Softly, drowsily,  
Out of sleep ;  
Into the world again  
Ann's eyes peep ;  
Over the pictures  
Across the walls  
One little quivering  
Sunbeam falls.  
A thrush in the garden  
Seems to say,  
Wake, little Ann,  
'Tis day, 'tis day !  
Faint sweet breezes  
The casement stir,  
Breathing of pinks  
And lavender.  
At last from her pillow,  
With cheeks bright red,  
Up comes her round little  
Tousled head ;  
And out she tumbles  
From her warm bed.

Little birds bathe  
In the sunny dust,  
Whether they want to,  
Or not, they *must*.







Puma, Panther, Leopard, and Lion  
Nothing but green grass have to dry on ;  
Seals and Walruses in a trice  
Flick their water-drops into Ice ;  
Back to his forests the Elephant swings  
Caked in mud against bites and stings ;  
As for the plump Hippopotamus,  
He steams himself dry to save a fuss ;  
And the bird that cries to her mate Quack, Quack !  
Is oily by nature if not by knack,  
So the water pearls off *her* beautiful back.

But sailing the world's wide ocean round,  
In a big broad bale from Turkey bound,  
All for the sake of Elizabeth Ann  
This towel's been sent by a Mussulman,  
And with might and main she must rub—rub—rub—  
Till she's warm and dry from her morning tub.



Now twelve above,  
And twice six beneath,  
She must polish and polish  
Her small, sharp teeth.  
The picture, you see,  
Entirely fails  
To show how nicely  
She's nipped her nails.  
But it's perfectly clear  
With what patient care  
She has drawn back neatly  
Her smooth brown hair.  
All *tiresome* things,  
I'm bound to say,  
For beasts just scratch  
Their claws away.  
And never from Egypt  
Up to Rome  
Walked monkey using  
An ivory comb.  
But there, Ann dear,  
You'd rather be  
A slim-tailed mermaid  
In the sea :  
And she has only  
One small care—  
To sleek and sleek and sleek  
Her hair.





Here all we see  
Is Ann's small nose,  
A smile, two legs,  
And ten pink toes,  
Neatly arranged  
In two short rows.



The Queen of Arabia, Uanjinee,  
Slaves to dress her had thirty three ;  
Eleven in scarlet, eleven in rose,  
Eleven in orange, as every one knows ;  
And never was lady lovelier than she—  
The Queen of Arabia, Uanjinee.  
Yet—though, of course, 'twould be vain to tell a-  
Nother word about Cinderella—  
Except for a Mouse on the chimney shelf,  
*She* put on her slippers quite—quite by herself,  
And I can't help thinking the greater pleasure  
Is to dress in haste, and look lovely at leisure.  
Certainly summer or winter, Ann  
*Always* dresses as quick as she can.



And there she is (on the other side),  
The last button buttoned, the last tape tied.  
Her silky hair has perched upon it  
A flat little two-stringed linen bonnet.  
Each plump brown leg that comes out of her frock  
Hides its foot in a shoe and a sock.

But what we wear—O dearie me !—  
Is naught but a patch upon what we *be*.  
And rags and tatters often hide  
A brave little body bunched up inside.  
And one thing's certain ; nobody knows  
The Good from the Wicked by just their Clothes.



England over,  
And all June through,  
Daybreak's peeping  
At half-past two.  
Roses and dewdrops  
Begin to be  
Wonderful lovely  
At half-past three.  
Gulls and cormorants  
On the shore,  
Squabble for fishes  
At half-past four.  
The great Queen Bee  
In her golden hive  
Is sleek with nectar  
By half-past five.  
The ravening birds  
In the farmer's ricks  
Are hungry for luncheon  
At half-past six.  
While all the pigs  
From York to Devon,  
Have finished their wash  
Before half-past seven.  
But Elizabeth Ann  
Gets up so late  
She has only begun  
At half-past eight  
To gobble her porridge up—  
Hungry soul—  
Tucked up in a bib,  
Before her bowl.





Thousands of years ago,  
In good King George's isles,  
Forest—to forest—to forest spread,  
For miles and miles and miles.  
All kinds of beasts roamed there,  
Drank of Teviot and Thames,  
Beasts of all shapes and sizes and colours,  
But without any names.  
And snug and shag in his coat,  
With green little eyes aglare,  
Trode on his paws, with tapping of claws,  
The beast men now call Bear ;  
Lurched on his legs and stole  
Out of the rifts in the trees  
All the sweet oozy summer-sun comb  
Of the poor little bees ;  
Sat in the glades and caught  
Flies by the hour,  
Munched 'em up, just like a dog,  
Sweet with the sour.

But Time, she nods her head—  
Like flights of the butterfly,  
Mammoths fade through her hours ;  
And Man draws nigh.  
And it's ages and ages ago ;  
Felled are the forests, in ruin ;  
Gone are the thickets where lived on his lone  
Old Bruin.



When safe into the fields Ann got,  
She chose a dappled, shady spot,  
Beside a green, rush-bordered pool,  
Where, over water still and cool,  
The little twittering birds did pass,  
Like shadows in a looking glass.  
Ann slyly looked this way, and that ;  
And then took off her shady hat.  
She peeped—and peeped ; off came her frock,  
Followed in haste by shoe and sock.  
Then softly, slowly, down she went  
To where the scented rushes bent,  
And all among the fishes put  
Like a great giant, her little foot,  
And paddled slowly to and fro  
Each little tiny thirsty toe.  
Then dabbling in the weeds she drew  
Her fingers the still water through,  
Trying in vain with groping hand  
To coax a stickleback to land ;  
But when she had nearly housed him in,  
Away he'd dart on flickering fin,  
The softly wavering stalks between.  
Then back she climbed into the meadow,  
And sitting in the sun-flecked shadow,  
Safely beside old Bruin again,  
She wreathed a dainty daisy chain ;







Soon after in her garden,  
While playing with her ball,  
Ann heard a distant music  
On the other side the wall—  
A far-off singing, shrill and sweet,  
In the still and sunshine day,  
And these the words were of the song  
That voice did sing and say :—

“ Happy, happy it is to be  
Where the greenwood hangs o’er the dark blue sea ;  
To roam in the moonbeams clear and still  
And dance with the elves  
Over dale and hill ;  
To taste their cups, and with them roam  
The fields for dewdrops and honeycomb.  
Climb then, and come, as quick as you can,  
And dwell with the fairies, Elizabeth Ann ! ”

Ann held her ball, and listened ;  
The faint song died away ;  
And it seemed it was a dream she’d dreamed  
In the hot and sunshine day ;  
She heard the whistling of the birds,  
The droning of the bees ;  
And then once more the singing came,  
And now the words were these :—





“ Never, never, comes tear or sorrow,  
In the mansions old where the fairies dwell ;  
But only the harping of their sweet harp-strings,  
And the lonesome stroke of a distant bell,  
Where upon hills of thyme and heather,  
The shepherd sits with his wandering sheep ;  
And the curlew wails, and the skylark hovers  
Over the sand where the conies creep ;  
Climb then, and come, as quick as you can,  
And dwell with the fairies, Elizabeth Ann ! ”

And just as Ann a-tiptoe crept,  
Under the old green wall,  
To where a stooping cherry tree  
Grew shadowy and tall ;  
Above the fairy’s singing  
Hollow and shrill and sweet,  
That seemed to make her heart stand still,  
And then more wildly beat,  
Came Susan’s voice a-calling “ Ann !  
Come quick as you are able ;  
And wash your grubby hands, my dear,  
For dinner’s on the table ! ”

There was an old woman who lived in the Fens  
Who had for her breakfast two nice fat hens.  
There was an old woman who lived at Licke  
Whatever she gobbled up gobbled up quick.  
There was an old woman who lived at Bow  
Who waited until her guests should go.  
There was an old woman who lived at Ware  
Supped on red-currant jelly and cold jugged hare.  
There was an old woman who lived at Bury  
Who always ate in a violent hurry.  
There was an old woman who lived at Flint  
Fed her sheep on parsley, her lambs on mint.  
There was an old woman who lived at Cork  
Lunched with her nevvie on pease and pork.  
There was an old woman who lived at Greenwich  
Went out with a candle to cut herself spinach.  
There was an old woman who lived at Hull  
Who never stopped eating till she was full.  
There was an old woman who lived at Diss  
Who couldn't abide greens, gristle, or grease.  
There was an old woman who lived at Thame  
Who ate up the courses just as they came.  
There was an old woman who lived at Tring  
At meals did nothing but laugh and sing.  
There was an old woman who lived at Steep  
Who still munched on though fast asleep.  
There was an old woman who lived at Wick  
Whose teeth did nothing but clash and click.  
There was an old woman who lived at Lundy  
Always had hash for dinner on Monday.  
There was an old woman who lived at Dover  
Threw to her pigs whatever was over.

But this little morsel of morsels here—  
Just what it is is not quite clear :  
It might be pudding, it might be meat,  
Cold, or hot, or salt, or sweet ;  
Baked, or roasted, or broiled, or fried ;  
Bare, or frittered, or puddinged, or pied ;  
Cooked in a saucepan, jar, or pan—  
But it's all the same to Elizabeth Ann.  
For when one's hungry it doesn't much matter  
So long as there's *something* on one's platter.



Now fie ! O fie ! How sly a face !  
Half greedy joy, and half disgrace ;  
O foolish Ann, O greedy finger,  
To long for that forbidden ginger !

O Ann, the story I could tell !—  
What horrid, horrid things befell  
Two gluttonous boys who soft did creep,  
While Cook was in her chair asleep,  
Into a cupboard, there to make  
A feast on stolen tipsy-cake—  
Which over night they had hid themselves,  
On one of her store cupboard shelves ;  
They ate so much, they ate so fast,  
They both were sadly stuffed at last.  
Drowsy and stupid, blowsed and blown,  
In sluggish sleep they laid them down,  
And soon rose up a stifled snore  
From where they huddled on the floor.  
And, presently, Cook, passing by,  
Her cupboard door ajar did spy,  
And that all safe her stores might be,  
'Turned with her thumb the noiseless key.  
Night came with blackest fears to wrack  
Those greedy knaves (named Dick and Jack) ;  
They woke ; and in the stuffy gloom  
Waited in vain for Cook to come.  
They dared not knock, or kick, or shout ;  
Not knowing *who* might be about.  
The days dragged on. Their parents said,  
“ Poor Dick and Jack ; they must be dead ! ”  
Hungrier and hungrier they grew ;  
They searched the darksome cupboard through ;



Candles, and soda, salt, and string,  
Soap, glue—they ate up everything :  
Nothing but shadows they seemed to be,  
Gnawing a stick of wood for tea.  
At length, at last, alas ! alack !  
Jack looked at Dick ; and Dick at Jack ;  
And in his woe each famished brother  
Turned in the dusk and ate the other.

So when Cook came to open the door,  
Nothing was there upon the floor ;  
As with her candle she stood there,  
Ceiling to floor the place was bare ;  
Not even a little heap of bones  
That had been two fat brothers once !

And see ! That foolish Ann's forgot  
To put the cover on the pot ;  
And also smeared—the heedless ninny—  
Her sticky fingers on her pinny.  
And, O dear me ! without a doubt,  
Mamma has found the culprit out.  
And Ann is weeping many a tear ;  
And shame has turned her back, poor dear ;  
Lonely and angry, in disgrace,  
She's hiding her poor mottled face.  
But ginger now will tempt in vain,  
She'll never, never taste again.





But as when April showers are gone  
Shines out again the beauteous sun,  
So, too, Ann's sobbing " Sorry " said,  
She was as quickly comforted :  
And here, upon the stroke of three,  
Half-way 'twixt dinner-time and tea,  
Cosily tucked in her four-legged chair,  
With nice clean hands and smooth brushed hair,  
In some small secret nursery nook,  
She sits with her big Picture book.

There Puss in Boots, with sidelong eye  
And bushy tail goes mincing by ;  
Peering into an empty cupboard  
With her old Dog stoops Mother Hubbard ;  
Beside a bushy bright-green Wood  
Walks with the Wolf Red Ridinghood ;  
In their small Cottage the Three Bears,  
Each at his bowl of Porridge stares ;  
There's striking Clock—and scampering Mouse ;  
The King of Hearts' cool Counting-house ;  
There a Fine Lady rides all day,  
But never, never rides away ;  
While Jack and Jill for ever roll ;  
And drinks to his Fiddlers Old King Cole.

And though Ann's little busy head  
Can't quite get down from A to Z,  
She is content to sit and look  
At her bright-coloured Picture book.



As soon as ever twilight comes,  
Ann creeps upstairs to pass,  
With one tall candle, just an hour  
Before her looking-glass.  
She rummages old wardrobes in,  
Turns dusty boxes out ;  
And nods and curtseys, dances, sings,  
And hops and skips about.  
Her candle's lean long yellow beam  
Shines softly in the gloom,  
And through the window's gathering night  
Stars peep into the room.

Ages and ages and ages ago,  
Ann's great-grandmother dressed just so ;  
In a big poke-bonnet, a Paisley shawl,  
Climbed into her coach to make a call ;  
And over the cobble-stones jogged away,  
To drink with her daughter a dish of tay.

Then nice little boys wore nankeen breeches ;  
And demure little girls with fine silk stitches  
Learned to make samplers of beasts and birds  
And ever so many most difficult words.  
Then Anns and Matildas and Sams and Dicks  
Were snoring in blankets long before six.  
And every night with a tallow candle,  
And a warming-pan with a four-foot handle,  
The maids came up to warm the bed ;  
(And burnt a great hole in the sheet instead.)  
Then pretty maids blushed, and said, " My nines ! "  
At hundreds of thousands of Valentines.  
Then never came May but danced between  
Robin and Marion Jack-in-the-Green ;  
Then saged and onioned, and stewed in its juice,  
To table on Michaelmas Day sailed Goose ;



Gunpowder Treason and Plot to remember  
Bonfires blazed on the fifth of November ;  
And never the Waits did a-carolling go  
In less than at least a yard of snow.

So—poor little Ann a sigh must smother  
Because she isn't her great-grandmother.

But now, dear me !  
What's this we see ?  
A dreadful G—  
H—O—S—T !  
A-glowing with  
A chalk-white face  
Out of some dim  
And dismal place.  
Oh, won't poor Nurse  
Squeal out, when she  
Comes up, that dreadful  
Shape to see !  
She'll pant and say,  
“ O la ! Miss Ann,  
I thought you was  
A bogey-man !  
Now ! look at them  
Untidy clo'es !  
And, did you ever,  
What a nose !  
If you was in  
A smock, Miss Ann,  
They'd take you for  
The Miller's man.  
To see the mischief  
You have done,  
And me not twenty minutes gone !



“ But now, my dear, for gracious sake,  
Eat up this slice of currant cake ;  
Though, certain sure, you’ll soon be screaming  
For me to come—and find you dreaming.  
In *my* young days in bed we’d be  
Once we had swallowed down our tea.  
And cake !—we’d dance if mother spread  
A scrape of butter on our bread !  
Except my brother, little Jack,  
Who was, poor mite, a humptyback.  
But there ! times change ; he’s grown a man ;  
And I’m no chick meself, Miss Ann.  
Now, don’t ’ee move a step from here,  
I sha’n’t be gone for long, my dear ! ”









But higgledy-piggledy  
Slovenly Ann  
Jumps out of her clothes  
As fast as she can ;  
And with frock, sock, shoe,  
Flung anywhere,  
Slips from dressedupedness  
Into her bare.

Now, just as when the day began,  
Without one clo', sits little Ann,  
A-toasting in this scant attire  
Her cheeks before the nursery fire.

Golden palaces there she sees,  
With fiery fountains, flaming trees ;  
Through darkling arch and smouldering glen  
March hosts of little shimmering men,  
To where beneath the burning skies  
A blazing salamander lies,  
Breathing out sparks and smoke the while  
He watches them with hungry smile.



Now, through the dusk  
With muffled bell  
The Dustman comes  
The world to tell,  
Night's elfin lanterns  
Burn and gleam  
In the twilight, wonderful  
World of Dream.

Hollow and dim  
Sleep's boat doth ride,  
Heavily still  
At the waterside.  
Patter, patter,  
The children come,  
Yawning and sleepy,  
Out of the gloom.

Like droning bees  
In a garden green,  
Over the thwarts  
They clamber in.  
And lovely Sleep  
With long-drawn oar  
Turns away  
From the whispering shore.

Over the water  
Like roses glide  
Her hundreds of passengers  
Packed inside,  
To where in her garden  
Tremble and gleam  
The harps and lamps  
Of the World of Dream.

## LOB LIE BY THE FIRE

He squats by the fire  
On his three-legged stool,  
When all in the house  
With slumber are full.

And he warms his great hands,  
Hanging loose from each knee,  
And he whistles as soft  
As the night wind at sea.

For his work now is done ;  
All the water is sweet ;  
He has turned each brown loaf,  
And breathed magic on it.

The milk in the pan,  
And the bacon on beam  
He has " spelled " with his thumb,  
And bewitched has the dream.

Not a mouse, not a moth,  
Not a spider but sat,  
And quaked as it wondered  
What next he'd be at.

But his heart, O, his heart—  
It belies his great nose ;  
And at gleam of his eye  
Not a soul would suppose

He had stooped with great thumbs,  
And big thatched head,  
To tuck his small mistress  
More snugly in bed.

Who would think, now, a throat  
So lank and so thin  
Might make birds seem to warble  
In the dream she is in !

Now, hunched by the fire,  
While the embers burn low,  
He nods until daybreak,  
And at daybreak he'll go.

Soon the first cock will 'light  
From his perch and point high  
His beak at the Ploughboy  
Grown pale in the sky ;

And crow will he shrill ;  
Then, meek as a mouse,  
Lob will rouse up and shuffle  
Straight out of the house.

His supper for breakfast ;  
For wages his work ;  
And to warm his great hands  
Just an hour in the mirk.

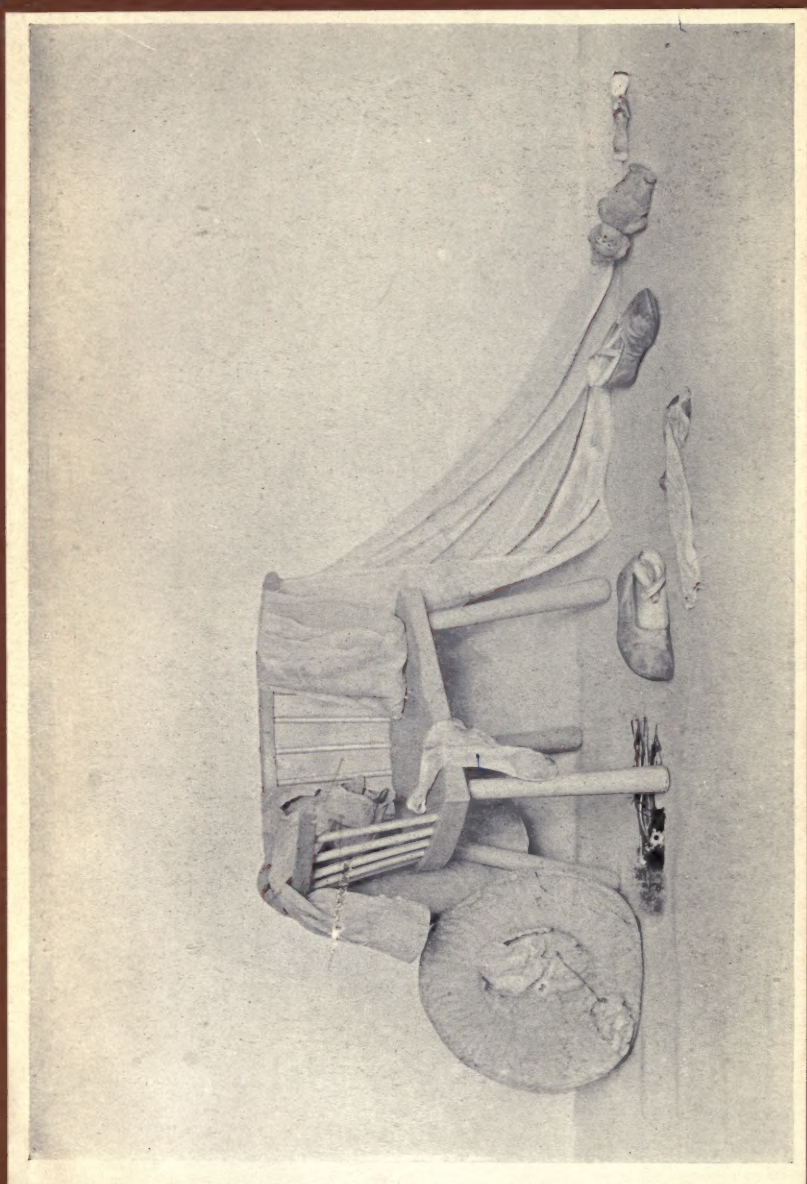


Sadly, O, sadly, the sweet bells of Baddeley  
Played in their steeples when Robin was gone,  
    Killed by an arrow,  
    Shot by Cock Sparrow,  
Out of a Maybush, fragrant and wan.

Grievedly, grievedly, tolled distant Shieveley,  
When the Dwarfs laid poor Snow-white asleep on the  
    hill,  
    Drownsed by an apple,  
    The Queen, sly and subtle,  
Had cut with her knife on the blossomy sill.

O then, mourn Baddeley ;  
O then, toll Shieveley ;  
This brief day now over ;  
Life's but a span ;  
Tell how my heart aches,  
Tell how my heart breaks,  
To bid now farewell  
To Elizabeth Ann.

Lullay O, lullaby,  
Sing this sad roundelay,  
Muted the strings ;  
Since Sorrow began,  
The World's said goodbye, Ann,  
And so too, must I, Ann ;  
Child of one brief day,  
Elizabeth Ann.





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De La Mare, Walter John  
A child's day

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